

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church
Nondalton
Alaska < Bristol Bay

HABS No. AK-84

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ST. NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

HABS No. AK-84

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Location: Nondalton, Six Mile Lake, Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: A number of Russian Orthodox churches survive in Alaska, built by Native congregations in traditional forms. Moved from its original site at Old Nondalton, added to, and covered with corrugated metal, St. Nicholas Church is distinguished by its semi-octagonal sanctuary end with polygonal roof.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Built 1931-33 at Old Nondalton, according to Andrew Balluta.
2. Original plans and construction: The log church was originally about 20' x 20', with a semi-octagonal sanctuary. The tarpaper-covered roof was gabled on the west end and polygonal over the polygonal sanctuary. The windows had six-light sash. There was a bell stand on the south side of the entrance.
3. Alterations and additions: This church was moved with the village to New Nondalton. In 1939, a new site for the village was located. A Civilian Conservation Corps team composed of Native workers cleared the site for the village and moved the first building in 1941. In 1946, after the whole village had been relocated, the church was moved. The logs were disassembled and moved by dogsled, and the church was re-erected.

In the early 1950s, the nave was extended to the west about 10' with a wood-framed addition. The vestibule was also added at that time. The building was covered with corrugated metal, probably also at that time.

A ca. 1975 photograph shows the building with a small belfry on the west end of the roof; this has been removed.

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B. Previous Churches on the Site:

A log church with a semi-hexagonal sanctuary end was constructed at the village of Kijik on Lake Clark in about 1886. In 1901, the village moved to Old Nondalton, in order to be closer to Bristol Bay and to the trading post at Iliamna. A smaller church was constructed at that time.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Corrugated metal covers this rectangular, gable-roofed church, which has a polygonal roof over its semi-octagonal sanctuary end.
2. Condition of fabric: fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building measures 20'-2" x 34'-10", with a semi-octagonal end on the east. The vestibule on the west measures 12'-2" x 10'-1".
2. Foundations: wood post.
3. Walls: The walls are covered with corrugated metal.
4. Structural system: The original section is hewn logs; the addition is wood-framed.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The doorway on the north side of the vestibule has no door, while that on the south side is covered with plywood.
 - b. Windows: The windows have six-light, fixed sash in plain frames.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof, polygonal on the east end, is covered with corrugated metal. The shed roof over the vestibule is covered with the same material.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: There are exposed rafter ends at the cornice.
 - c. Cupola: There is a very small onion dome near the eastern end of the nave.

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C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The nave is one open space, separated from the sanctuary on the east by the iconostas. The addition is marked by partial arches against the walls. The vestibule is on the west.
2. Stairways: None. There is a single step in front of each door in the iconostas. Krilos along the walls are delineated by plywood partitions, but not raised.
3. Flooring: Plywood, painted yellow.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plywood, painted white.
5. Doorways: There is a single door between the vestibule and the nave.
6. Decorative features: The iconostas is plywood, covered with wallpaper. There are also candlestands, hand-carved by Ivan Koktlash, and a wooden chandelier.

There is a square recess in the ceiling of the nave, reminiscent of a dome.
7. Mechanical equipment: The church is equipped with electricity and an oil stove.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Located on the side of the hill in the center of town, the church faces west, away from the water, with the altar on the east, as is traditional among Russian Orthodox churches. The cemetery is located farther up the hill.
2. New church: A new church has been under construction since 1988. It is rectangular, approximately 40' x 52', with the sanctuary incorporated into the main block of the nave. A vestibule will be added. The church has a gable roof and three onion domes. A new iconostas and new icons will be made for the church. On the interior, there is an octagonal recessed space in the ceiling.

The designer and builder of this church is Jimmy Balluta, who looked at other churches and pictures for ideas.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

The collections of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve include a photograph (accession no. H-34) taken ca. 1937, of the church before moving, addition, or siding.

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Mongin, Alfred, and Fr. Joseph P. Kreta, "National Register Nomination: Russian Orthodox Church Buildings and Sites," National Park Service, 1979. Ca. 1975 photograph shows church with belfry.

B. Interviews:

Andrew Balluta, resident of Nondalton and collaborator on the sociocultural history of Lake Clark being written by Linda Ellana for the National Park Service, interviewed by author May 29, 1990.

Jimmy Balluta, resident of Nondalton and builder of the new church, interviewed by author May 28, 1990.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.

ADDENDUM TO
ST. NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Nondalton
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